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Report on the intersessional meeting of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, 4 June 2013

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Chapter I

Decision adopted by the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation at its intersessional meeting

1. The High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation adopted the following decision at its intersessional meeting:

Decision 17/IM/1

The High-level Committee,

Reaffirms decision 17/1 of the seventeenth session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and further reiterates the request made therein to the Secretary-General to present, in consultation with Member States and as part of his comprehensive report to the eighteenth session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, concrete recommendations for strengthening the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, including its responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, as appropriate, to enable it to support the mainstreaming of South-South cooperation across the United Nations development system; and further requests that the report of the intersessional meeting of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation in 2013, including the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/66/717) and the note by the Secretary-General on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/66/717/Add.1), should inform the Secretary-General's comprehensive report to the eighteenth session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation.

Chapter II
High-level plenary segment

A. Opening of the meeting

2. At the opening segment of the meeting on the morning of 4 June 2013, the President of the seventeenth session of the Committee, the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations, opened the meeting and made an introductory statement.

3. At the same opening segment, a statement was made by a representative of the United Nations Development Programme.

4. Also at the same segment, a statement was made by the Director of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation.

B. Introduction of the report

5. After the opening segment on 4 June 2013, the Committee considered items 2 and 3 of its agenda. The list of documents before the Committee at its intersessional meeting is contained in annex II to the present report.

6. An inspector of the Joint Inspection Unit introduced the report entitled "South-South and triangular cooperation in the United Nations system" (A/66/717).

7. A representative of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) introduced the note by the Secretary-General transmitting his comments and those of CEB, entitled "South-South and triangular cooperation in the United Nations system" (A/66/717/Add.1).

C. Discussion

8. The intersessional meeting of the Committee considered the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on South-South and triangular cooperation in the United Nations system and the related note by the Secretary-General transmitting his comments and those of CEB on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit. Speakers at the half-day intersessional meeting underscored the growing importance of South-South and triangular cooperation, particularly at a time when the international community is looking to forge and strengthen partnerships to accelerate progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals and to deliver on the post-2015 development agenda.

9. One concrete outcome of the meeting was the draft decision that was brought up for discussion by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Group of 77 and China during the debate and discussed informally among participating delegates. The draft decision reiterated decision 17/1 of the seventeenth session of the Committee, requesting the Secretary-General to provide concrete recommendations for strengthening the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation to improve its responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency as well as its ability to support the mainstreaming of South-South cooperation across the United Nations system. By that decision, the report of the Joint Inspection Unit and the related note by the

Secretary-General would inform the proposals on the measures needed to strengthen the Office.

10. Throughout the debate, which focused mainly on the multiple recommendations stemming from the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, two consistent themes were noted: a focus on mainstreaming, and a focus on improving the governance or institutional arrangements of United Nations support for South-South cooperation. Overall, speakers welcomed the work of the Joint Inspection Unit, acknowledged the usefulness of its report and appreciated the work done to date to implement the recommendations by various members of the United Nations system, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation. One Member State voiced concern that the report of the Joint Inspection Unit was being considered two years after its release in 2011 and remarked that the intersessional meeting should result in concrete actions to be taken on the recommendations outlined in the report. A group of Member States observed that the report would have benefited from the examination and identification of lessons learned and best practices from implementing South-South and triangular cooperation in addition to an analysis of how the United Nations system could best scale up its work in that area.

11. Member States specifically emphasized the mainstreaming of South-South cooperation and, in that regard, stated their support for the framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation. The inclusion of South-South cooperation in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and in the strategic plan of UNDP for 2014-2017 was also welcomed. Member States also expressed their desire for the United Nations system as a whole to identify lessons learned and best practices from the implementation of South-South and triangular cooperation found across the United Nations system to ensure that its work is meaningful and responsive to the needs of participants in South-South and triangular cooperation. Overall, United Nations organizations and agencies were encouraged to support the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, which was in turn encouraged to support the broader United Nations system at the headquarters, regional and country levels to identify new and enhanced opportunities for South-South cooperation and to facilitate initiatives that are beneficial to Member States.

12. Regarding the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit to establish a formal definition of South-South cooperation, multiple speakers expressed their disinterest in engaging in political processes to establish such a definition. They noted that South-South cooperation is driven and determined by Member States who do not want their flexibility circumscribed with a formal definition and also do not want to waste valuable time discussing definitions when the focus should be on the implementation of principles that have already been established formally through the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (see General Assembly resolution 64/222, annex) and other decisions of the Committee and the General Assembly. Some Member States remarked that definitions and principles embodied in existing policy documents provide guidance on the application of South-South cooperation in the planning, operational and programming work of the United Nations system.

13. A number of speakers welcomed the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit calling for dedicated structures, resources and regular reporting on South-South

cooperation activities, including progress made in implementing the tenets of the Nairobi outcome document and the operational guidelines of the Secretary-General for their implementation. In particular, a group of Member States encouraged the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and all relevant United Nations system organizations to take forward the application of the operational guidelines in a flexible, consultative and practical manner at the headquarters and field levels and to identify key lessons and experiences from their applications of those guidelines. They also indicated an interest in hearing about those experiences at the eighteenth session of the Committee. One speaker noted the recommendation to establish a monitoring system for South-South and triangular cooperation activities, with its findings to be included as inputs to reports presented to the various oversight bodies, including the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Committee.

14. While acknowledging the importance of South-South cooperation, concerns were expressed that its importance has not been adequately reflected in the provision of resources, both financial and human, across the United Nations system, specifically in relation to the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, which serves as the secretariat of the Committee.

15. A large number of Member States noted their support for the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit that the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation be established as the appropriate body for overall coordination and strategy on South-South cooperation within the United Nations system, thus necessitating the strengthening of that Office, including a revision of its governance structure and financial resources. A group of Member States noted that renaming the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation as the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation was a step forward in responding to relevant General Assembly resolutions as well as to the Nairobi outcome document. Recalling decision 17/1 of the seventeenth session of the Committee, a group of Member States noted that any concrete measures by the Secretary-General to strengthen the Office would reflect the commitment of the United Nations system to support and promote the agenda of the South. The group therefore suggested the upgrading of the Office to the United Nations Entity for South-South Cooperation, with adequate financial, human and technical resources to fulfil its mandates.

16. Concerning the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit on the need to clarify the relationship between the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and its host, UNDP, some Member States called for measures that would elaborate the collaborative arrangements between the two parties, including the clarification of reporting lines and a clear division of roles, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms. A group of Member States noted that a collaborative framework between UNDP and the Office was needed to ensure a coherent approach and systematic integration of South-South approaches into UNDP programming.

17. A group of Member States emphasized that the lack of adequate funding is the major impediment to advancing South-South cooperation in the United Nations system. They welcomed the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit that called upon the governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations to apportion more core-budget resources towards the promotion of South-South cooperation in consultation with programme countries. It was also noted that the evaluation of the UNDP contribution to South-South cooperation has called upon the organization to

consider increasing funding and resource allocation to South-South cooperation. A group of Member States therefore requested that more funding from core budgets be directed towards South-South cooperation, with more fundraising efforts that are free from conditionalities in support of South-South cooperation. A group of Member States also reiterated General Assembly resolution 60/212, which designated the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation as the "main United Nations trust fund for promoting and supporting South-South and triangular initiatives". They also supported efforts to upgrade the Fund to a fully functioning voluntary trust fund and to expand the core resources of the Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation in accordance with the relevant Assembly resolutions and Committee decisions.

18. Some Member States also welcomed the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit to review the current governance structure and secretariat support of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation to the Committee in addition to revitalizing the working methods of the Committee to transform it into a more responsive standing body, with a specific proposal raised to transform the Committee into the United Nations Commission on South-South Cooperation. To advance the proposal, some Member States have asked the Secretary-General to incorporate the idea of a United Nations Commission on South-South Cooperation into the forthcoming report called for in decision 17/1 and requested an update on the status of the implementation of that decision.

Chapter III

Closure of the meeting and adoption of the decision of the Committee

19. At the closure of the meeting, the Committee adopted its decision. In his closing statement, the President of the Committee requested the Rapporteur, Joshua Mugodo (Kenya), to prepare the report of the intersessional meeting of the Committee with the support of the secretariat and to circulate the draft among Member States for their comments before finalizing it for submission to the eighteenth session of the Committee.

Chapter IV
Organizational matters

A. Date and place of the meeting

20. The Committee held its intersessional meeting at United Nations Headquarters on 4 June 2013 pursuant to its decision 17/2, by which the Committee approved the provisional agenda for its eighteenth session, including item 3, which addresses follow-up actions arising from previous sessions of the Committee, including actions arising out of the consideration of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on South-South and triangular cooperation.

B. Attendance

21. The half-day intersessional meeting of the Committee was attended by representatives of States Members of the United Nations. Also in attendance were representatives of certain specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations. The list of participants is contained in annex I of the present report.

C. Adoption of the agenda

22. The Committee adopted the agenda of its intersessional meeting on 4 June 2013, at the start of its deliberations.

Annex I

List of participants

United Nations Members States and observers

Afghanistan, Algeria, Australia, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Germany, Fiji, France, Luxembourg, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Japan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa, South Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Thailand, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Zimbabwe and the European Union

United Nations Secretariat

United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes

United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund

Subsidiary organ of the United Nations system

Joint Inspection Unit

Annex II

List of documents

Provisional agenda of the intersessional meeting of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation (SSC/17/IM/L.1)

South-South and triangular cooperation in the United Nations system (A/66/717)

Note by the Secretary-General on South-South and triangular cooperation in the United Nations system (A/66/717/Add.1)